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USDA OUTLOOK INFORMATION COMMUNICATED

During the recent annual USDA Agricultural Outlook Conference, a new communications effort was attempted.

A "900" telephone service was provided for those who wanted to call in and listen to any speaker or group of speakers during the conference. The Texas Agricultural Extension Service took advantage of the "900" telephone service to communicate the Outlook speakers' comments to 16 locations around the state.

Sylvia McMullen, Texas Extension communications specialist, said they called the 900 telephone number from her office at Texas A&M University, College Station. Then they bridged this call into their dedicated teleconference line network to the 16 locations.

Each segment of the Outlook Conference carried was then followed by a discussion led by Texas A&M agricultural economists on campus.

Some of the off campus locations invited news media, producers and other interested parties to listen and take part in the discussions.

"INSIDE" ELECTRONIC MAILING RESULTS II

Enough "Inside Information" readers found our recent electronic mailing results interesting, that we'll present results of the last two issues, too.

The APHIS Information Division in Washington was the first to pull the Nov. 7 "Inside"--at 7:21 a.m. (before the last page was actually sent).

The Florida Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services was right behind, at 7:26 a.m., while the AMS Information Division pulled the first page at 7:27 a.m.

Total of 45 electronic mail users read the Nov. 7 "Inside" by noon the first day it was available; 73 by the end of the first day. Another 12 read it the second day, while 3 pulled the third day, 1 the fourth and 4 finally read it the fifth day.

The FNS Information Division in Washington was first out with the Nov. 14 issue, pulling it at 7:26 a.m. Total of 48 had read the Nov. 14 issue by noon, and 72 by the end of the first day. Another 11 pulled that issue the second day, 10 pulled on the third day, 2 on the fourth and 2 on the fifth.

MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DESCRIBED

James E. Grunig, professor with the University of Maryland's College of Journalism, met with USDA communicators at the invitation of the DC Region of Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE).

Dr. Grunig discussed models of public relations (public information or public affairs to those in government) in agriculture and government agencies, and why organizations choose to manage public relations in different ways.

He reviewed the four models: Press Agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric.

Government, nonprofit associations and some businesses practice the "public information" model, with the purpose to disseminate information one-way and where truth is important, Grunig said.

Competitive businesses and agencies practice the "two-way asymmetric" model, using scientific persuasion for two-way, imbalanced effects.

Regulated businesses and agencies practice the "two-way symmetric" model, using mutual understanding for two-way, balanced effects.

The "press agency/publicity" model is used mostly for sports, theatre and product promotion. Grunig describes this as "propaganda" one-way, where the complete truth is not essential.

The University of Maryland is assigning journalism/communications graduate students to agricultural communications research projects.

FORMER USDA COMMUNICATOR DIES

Beryl Stanton, former editor of the USDA periodical "News for Farmer Cooperatives" and a USDA employee for about 33 years, died recently following a heart attack. She was 74 years old.

Stanton became editor of the cooperatives periodical in 1950 and held that post until her retirement from USDA in 1971.

She was the newsletter and yearbook editor for the American Institute of Cooperation from 1971 to 1981, and worked for the Cooperative League of USA until her retirement last year.

USING SMALL COMPUTERS IN GOVERNMENT

"Using small computers in government" and "Developing small computer applications in government" are two back-to-back seminars being presented by the U.S. Professional Development Institute at four locations after the first of the year.

The locations and dates are: New Orleans, La., Jan. 9-10, 11-12; Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 23-24, 25-26; Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 6-7, 8-9; and Washington, D.C., Feb. 27-28, 29-Mar. 1.

The seminars are devoted to the successful implementation of small computer technology in government.

Registration fee for each 2-day seminar is \$395, or \$625 for both.

To register, call (301) 445-4400, or write to USPD, Small Computer Systems in Government, Dept AB, 1805 Powder Mill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20903.

OFFICE AUTOMATION SPREADING, INEVITABLE

Craig L. Fuller, Assistant to the President for Cabinet Affairs, recently delivered the opening day address at the Federal Office Automation Conference.

Fuller encouraged federal office administrators to take full advantage of technological developments to upgrade internal operations within their departments and agencies. (Fuller uses the Dialcom electronic mail service to communicate with the various Cabinet Secretaries and others.)

COMPUTERWORLD, a weekly trade publication, echoed Fuller's remarks in a recent editorial, but said that a lot of people are missing the boat on office automation.

"Whether it's despite all the hype or because of it, too many people are confused, unaware or misled in the area of office automation," the editorial said. "Some have only a vague, general idea of how to automate office procedures and an even more vague idea of what's supposed to happen when these procedures are automated.

"Others think office automation is really part of communications, which shows a lack of understanding of both communications and office technologies.

"Communications technologies are needed to integrate office technologies; they act as a catalyst, certainly.

"However, just as telecommunications includes more than the office, so does office automation encompass a great deal more than communications.

"Still others view office automation as a specific technology or group of products--for example, microcomputers. These people are not seeing the forest for the trees, however, and are missing what's happening in terms of real, long-lasting changes in organizations around the country.

"Office automation--end-user computing--is spreading into every office. There is no getting away from it. At an earlier time, employers found it difficult to accept the idea of air conditioning offices to encourage greater productivity among employees, but now it is a foregone conclusion.

"Similarly, the telephone was originally a user-unfriendly device with not enough people "on line;" now times have changed and the telephone is a predetermined necessity in home and office--sometimes even in car or plane.

"So is office automation. So is the widespread use of computing technologies in the everyday jobs of noncomputer people.

"As computer literacy rises, as computer transparency increases and as information demand magnifies, employees in every office will be working with automation.

"It is essential to realize that office automation is a process, not only a combination of products. It is an evolving force reshaping the manner in which organizations conduct their business.

"This kind of change is not going to happen overnight or even in a 12-month span. What is occurring is widespread organizational change that is going to affect everyone.

"In organizations like banks or insurance companies, it would be impossible to conduct business by other than automated means; soon it will be just as unthinkable for other kinds of organizations not to use automation in order to maintain a competitive advantage.

"People won't be adopting office automation all at once. But even though it may be a slow transition, it is an inevitable one," the COMPUTER WORLD editorial concludes.

ARTICLE CLEARINGHOUSE NOW AVAILABLE

ITT Dialcom Incorporated recently announced the availability of the UMI Article Clearinghouse through the Dialcom electronic mail system.

This database includes more than 7,500 publications from which librarians, information specialists and others can order reprints of articles.

University Microfilms International, a division of Xerox Corporation, is the world's largest producer of microformed publications.

The new service is intended to make "more information more useful to more people," according to a ITT Dialcom announcement.

One of the advantages of the new service is the online order entry system which is automatically invoked when the desired publication is retrieved from the database.

The order form is completed by the user and sent electronically to the UMI order desk in Ann Arbor, Mich. The order is filled in 48 hours by first class mail or same day by Express mail or Federal Express (at an extra charge).

Customers may use credit card billing or establish deposit accounts with UMI. The individual article prices range from \$8 for charge customers to \$4 for deposit customers. Average Dialcom look-up in the database will cost about \$2.50.

Information about the new service is available from UMI at (800) 732-0616. Information regarding set-up on Dialcom system can be obtained from Alex Graham (98:ALEX) or Barbara Dammonn (98:BARBD) or by calling (312) 694-2536.

NEWSPAPERS PLAN FARM VIDEOTEX SERVICE

Three major California newspaper organizations recently announced the formation of a joint venture to operate a videotex service aimed at California farmers and agribusinesses.

The service, called "Grassroots California," joins Videotex America, a joint venture between Times Mirror (parent company of the Los Angeles TIMES) and Infomart of Toronto, Canada; McClatchy Newspapers, publishers of THE BEE newspapers at Sacramento, Fresno and Modesto; and TBO, Inc., publisher of the Bakersfield CALIFORNIAN.

"Grassroots California" will provide farmers with access to an information service with up-to-the-minute local weather, news, stock and commodity prices, chemical, seed and livestock market information, as well as a number of specialized farm management programs.

Home shopping and banking services will also be available.

Infomart is the leading developer of videotex software in Canada and has successfully operated an agricultural videotex service in western Canada since 1981. Times Mirror will launch "Gateway," an urban consumer videotex service by mid-1984 in Orange County, Calif.

Videotex is an interactive communications system that uses a telephone, television screen and keyboard to link subscribers to a computerized database.

Subscribers with little or no knowledge of computers can select the information they want to see and read, when they want it.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to the Deputy Director for Current Information, Room 458-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or to AGR002 mailbox on the Dialcom electronic mail system, or call (202) 447-7454.

